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DE RUEHAH #0858/01 1891238
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3109
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 5408
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 3136
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 3001
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
RHMCSUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 3652
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 000858

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, INL/AAE BUHLER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SNAR](#) [PGOV](#) [KCRM](#) [SOCI](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: FREE DISTRIBUTION OF ANTI-DRUG BROCHURES AND
OPEN DISCUSSIONS IN PUBLIC

11. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

12. (U) SUMMARY: The Red Crescent Society's Drug Demand Reduction Project (DDRP) recently conducted several public activities dedicated to the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Drug Trafficking. Among the public activities conducted were the distribution of brochures on the harmful effects of drug abuse, drawing contests and public discussions. The events aroused much public interest, as well as enthusiasm about discussing the issue openly in public. END SUMMARY.

13. (U) The INL-funded Drug Demand Reduction Project (DDRP), implemented by the International Red Crescent Society (IRCS,) took part in a nationwide observance of the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Drug Trafficking on June 26th. Jointly with the Turkmen government, the DDRP-operated NGO Magtymguly Youth Center conducted several public activities, including the one on June 21, when DDRP volunteers, dressed in IRCS T-shirts and caps, distributed brochures entitled "A Drug Free World" during a concert that was organized by the Magtymguly Youth Center. The concert was held in Ashgabat Park, a popular public gathering place, with several cafes, tennis courts and mini-soccer fields, an amphitheater, and several dozen tree-shaded benches. Over 250 pamphlets were given out by DDRP volunteers to young people and other members of the public who had come to hear the concert or relax in the park. The DDRP-published brochures contained information on drug abuse and narcotics in the Turkmen language. Each brochure had a label that stated it was published with the support of INL.

14. (U) Another event was organized by the DDRP on June 25 at Ashgabat's "Turkmenbashy World of Tales" amusement park. DDRP volunteers distributed over 350 "Drug Free World" brochures and held discussions on narcotics abuse with the park visitors. In addition, DDRP volunteers held a sidewalk drawing contest for children at the park. The contest's theme was "Defeat the Evil Together!" and winners received free tickets for rides, T-shirts and caps with the DDRP logo.

15. (U) Observance of the Day against Drug Abuse was marked by DDRP

branches located in all five provincial capitals. The DDRP volunteers distributed over 300 brochures in each of the five provinces at popular public gathering areas where the Magtymguly Youth Center organized concerts and drawing contests.

¶6. (U) The activities were fully supported by the Turkmen government as part of the country's program on combatting drug abuse and trafficking. At the June 17 State Security Council session, President Berdimuhamedov made specific mention of the government's preparations for the celebration of the Day against Drugs. He noted the need for the active participation of health care and educational institutions and public organizations in the fight against drug addiction. The State Counter-Narcotics Service was tasked to coordinate all the activities dedicated to mark the occasion. The Magtymguly Youth Center was put in charge of 120 events (including concerts, drawing and sport contests, workshops and lectures) nationwide. Most of the events were conducted jointly with UNODC, DDRP and other IRCS projects, such as one on HIV and AIDS prevention.

¶7. (SBU) The involvement of NGOs in the national anti-drug campaign was highly valued and praised. SCNS Prevention Department Head told the DDRP Coordinator, "We need your involvement in public activities. People listen to you more than to us".

¶8. (SBU) COMMENT: The distribution of brochures by DDRP volunteers at public gatherings in the capital and provinces was the first such public activity ever permitted. Handing out pamphlets in public had never been allowed before. The interest of the public was high. The brochures were taken with appreciation and some people were even asking additional copies for their friends and relatives. People

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eagerly discussed the drug abuse issue with volunteers openly in public. Teenagers (12-14 years old) and retired elders (over 60 years old) were the most active in talking to the volunteers. People, including a number of teenagers, were reportedly asking many questions about drug abuse and possible volunteer activities. Others were eager to talk about real life drug abuse stories. One person commented to the DDRP volunteer, "We knew that it was a problem. Your brochures have helped us understand it better." END COMMENT.

MILES